

November 10, 1958

Letter, You Chan Yang to Mr. Dag Hammarskjold

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Summary:

You Chan Yang, chairman of the Korean deligation sends letter concerning the issue of prisoners in North Korea and returning them to South Korea.

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REPUBLIC OF KOREA

NOV 28 1958

ACTION

TO:	<i>Mr. Coaker</i>
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Action Completed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acknowledged
<input type="checkbox"/>	No Action Required

MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. Murray
[Signature]

[Large red handwritten signature]

10 November 1958

PO 240 KOR

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Excellency,

I have the honour to draw your attention to the question of some 17,500 civilians who were forcibly taken to north Korea by the Communist invasion forces at the time of the Korean hostilities.

During the negotiations for the Armistice Agreement, the question of the return of these kidnapes was raised, and after arduous efforts on the part of the United Nations Command a specific provision was made in Paragraph 59 of the Armistice Agreement, which stipulates that all civilians who at the time of the Armistice were in north Korea and who on 24 June 1950 resided south of the Military Demarcation Line should, if they desire to return home, be permitted and assisted by the Communist Command authorities to return to the area south of the Military Demarcation Line. Similar provisions were made for civilians who desired to return to north Korea under parallel conditions and also for foreign nationals in the same paragraph.

His Excellency

Mr. Dag Hammarskjold

Secretary-General

of the United Nations

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In accordance with this provision, a wide publicity was given throughout South Korea informing all the persons concerned to apply for their return to north Korea if they so desired. As a result of this procedure, 37 persons were returned to north Korea by the United Nations Command on 1 March 1954. The Communist side, however, alleged that not a single Korean of those who were kidnapped by the Communist forces desired to rejoin with his family in the South, returning only 19 foreign nationals -- 11 Turkish and 8 Russians.

In May, 1954, the then Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Pyun, wrote the International Committee of the Red Cross and requested to render assistance in the return of these kidnapped civilians, pointing out the fact that they were forcibly taken away and held in the north against their will in flagrant violation not only of the Armistice terms but also of their fundamental human rights. Mr. Pyun also offered the full cooperation of the Republic of Korea with the ICRC in their activities in regard to this question.

In May, 1956, two representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross visited the Republic of Korea and an understanding was reached between them and the Red Cross Society of the Republic of Korea regarding the steps to be taken for the return of these displaced civilians as follows:

1. To send "Welfare and Whereabouts Inquiry Forms" to find out whether the persons in question are still alive in north Korea;

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2. To arrange, for those alive, for the exchange of correspondence with their families in the South;

3. To arrange for their return to the South.

As an initial first step under this understanding, Inquiry Forms covering 7,034 persons were sent to the ICRC for their action. However, replies to these inquiries were not forthcoming from north Korea. In July, 1957, at the 19th International Red Cross Conference held at New Delhi, we appealed to the Conference to take effective measures to bring about the return of these civilians to their homes, and a resolution setting forth a general principle on reunion of the separated families and urging intensified efforts by national societies in support of this principle was adopted.

It was only after these repeated efforts that the north Korean Communists released a list of 337 displaced civilians in their hand, but no information whatsoever on other kidnapes was given. Neither was there any indication that the Communists would return the 337 persons. Thus, all the efforts on our part to have these kidnapes return to their homes have been frustrated.

Under the circumstances, I am compelled to bring this matter again to your attention and would like to ask for your assistance in solving this tragic question by exercising your great influence.

Also, I would appreciate it, if you would be so kind as to circulate

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this note to all representatives of the States Members of the United Nations.

Accept, Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

You Chan Yang

You Chan Yang
Chairman of the Korean Delegation

Handwritten signature in red ink, likely a name in Korean or Chinese characters.